



# The Probable REASONS

Why the Fire that began in the City of *Edinburgh* the 3. of *February* 1700, did so suddenly spread, both with and against the Wind, and was not sooner stopt; with some *Proposals* how to prevent the like for the future.

**T**HE said Fire having first broke out in the East-most Turnpike that leads to and from the *Meal-mercato*, which is near the centre of those splendid Fabricks, now lying in Ashes.

1. The first Reason of its spreading so suddenly, and so far as it hath done, is, That most of the Lodgings and Tenements were possessed by Noblemen, Members of the Colledge of Justice, and principal Burgers, who had their several Houses richly furnished with Household-Furniture, which they were so mindful to preserve, that they employed most of the Tradesmen and Work-people (who should have been employed to extinguish the Fire) in saving of their Goods.

2. The most part of the Houses being Boxed with sawen Fir-Dales, and most of the Safe-Lintels of Doors and Windows being of Timber, which hath communication with the Lath and Geisting, and the Geisting very slender, the Fire getting entry upon the Boxing, it makes a violent Flame, enters the Lath and Geisting above, and of a sudden brings down the Flooring, and from one to another, till all the Tenement be destroyed, so that few dare adventure to enter a House where the Fire gets entry upon the Boxing.

3. The Houses being so prodigious high, as some of these were, & some strait Entries is a terrour to Work-people to enter or come near them when in Fire, fearing the Walls to fall upon them.

4. The Tradesmen and others, who have been active and instrumental in extinguishing Fires in *Edinburgh*, to the hazard of their Lives and Limbs, having been neglected (by those who reap the benefit of their Labour, by having their Lands and Goods preserved,) not being Gratified, is the occasion that so few are active at such Occasions.

*Overtures*

# **OVERTURES** *for preventing the spreading of accidental Fire, that may happen within the City of Edinburgh, or any other Town.*

1. **T**hat all Boxing of Houses be discharged, except Windows and Chimney-pieces; and that all Safe-Lintels over Doors or Windows be ordered to be of Stone.

2. That as the Estates of Parliament, out of their prudent and paternal Care, hath made several Acts against the Prodigality of Apparel, als well for promoting the Manufactories of the Kingdom, as to keep Money therein, that was unnecessarily employed abroad; so likewise, they may consider the Prodigality of late, in furnishing of Houses with all sorts of rich Furniture, and the Consequences thereof, and Regulate the same; and that in place of Boxing of Rooms, the Inhabitants may be obliged to hang their Rooms with Woollen-Hangings, and others not combustable, being of the Manufactury of the Kingdom, except for the use of the Nobility, or such others as the Parliament thinks fit to indulge.

3. That all Houses to be Built or Rebuilt in *Edinburgh*, be Geisted with good Square Geists, of a competent thickness, *Viz.* Six Inches thick, and Eight Inches deep at the smallest end; & if the House or Rooms be above Eighteen Foot wide betwixt Walls, the Geists ought to be squarer, that they may have strength to resist Fire for some time.

4. That all Houses be sufficiently Plastered before any Boxing of Windows or Chimney-pieces be fixed, so that there be no Communication betwixt the Boxing and Lath or Geisting.

5. That when any Fire shall happen to break out, the Neighbourhood, or other Inhabitants for the time may be discharged to remove their Plenishing, until first they lay apart as many Feather-Beds, and courst of their Woollen-Furniture as will stop the Windows of their Houses that appears any ways to be in hazard, with some of the courst of their Bed-plades to help to cover Roofs, or Timber Fore-Stairs, if needful.

6. That every Family that lives in a high House, and particularly those that live in Timber Lands, that they provide for their own Security, als many strong Cords as will go double from their Windows to the Street, with some allowance for tying within, and sloping it to the Street, that thereby they may not only convoy down their Plenishing deliberately, but also any person that may chance to stay in the House till the Fire enter upon the House where he is.

7. That the Hight of the Buildings may be strictly observed conform to the late Act of Parliament anent Building, and that where there is any Communication through a middle Wall, or from one Lodging to another, that both Cheeks, Solls and Lintels of the Doors be of Stone, and that the Doors thereof be made double and strong, and hung upon Iron Crooks.

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If the hight of these Fabricks of the Tenements last burnt be restricted, then those who had the uppermost Stories will lose their Property, and for supplying of this Loss, ther's a necessity that some Fond might be made, out of which their Loss ought to be compensated, and the most feasible Fond the Author hath thought upon is; That if the Estates of Parliament will out of their Bounty give their Concurrence and Assistance, in gratifying such as will lose their Property ( in the Burnt-Lands by restricting the Hight ) and for the Conveniency of most of the Leidges resorting to *Edinburgh*. There was a Project some years ago, to have had a Street leading from the High-Street to *Mentreschill*, and to be near upon a Lavel, razing the Houses on both sides of *Halkerstouns-Wynd*, and erecting new Lodgings on both sides, but the Purchas being too heavy for privat Men, it went no farther; But it's supposed that a Fond of 7000 *lib. sterl.* might purchase all the Houses, and help to lavel the Street, and gratify some of those Persons who will come short of their Houses. If this can be acceptable to the Estates of Parliament, to lay down a Fond to answer the above mentioned Design, *Edinburgh* might in few years be capable to accommodat the Leidges better than formerly, and have a more accessible Entry to and from the West, North and East, than ever they had before.

8. That Encouragement may be given to Trades-men and others, that shall happen to be active in extinguishing *Fire*, and that out of a Tax to be laid on upon the neighbouring Lands, and particularly upon those that were most in hazard, which they by their Care and Forewardness shall help to preserve, and that if any by their forewardness shall happen to lose their Lives or Limbs, there ought to be a Pension allowed to the Lane, and to the Widow and Infants of the Dead, but the Town of *Edinburgh* behaved to be at the first advance of such Gratifications.

9. That the Incorporations, as well the Merchants-Hall as Trades, do list and have in readiness, at all time when Fire shall happen, a Hundred good Men to wait upon the Magistrats, and to obey their Commands so soon as the first notice of Fire is given, & the Corporations are to furnish their Proportions of the said Hundred Men, or more if thought fit, according to the Strength and Number of the several Incorporations, and proportionally: And for this end, the Magistrats or the Incorporations themselves, ought to provide all Sorts of Instruments and Machines for Beating and Pulling down of Houses, and for extinguishing the Fire.

*These Proposals are offered out of respect to the Interest of the Kingdom in general, and to the City of Edinburgh in particular, by one who hath no particular Design of his own, hoping that wherein he is defective, others will not only supply it as to their Advice for Preservation of what is, or may be built, but will give their Advice anent the Regulation of the Fabricks to be built, and that either in Print or in Writings, to be given in to the Lord Provost and Council of Edinburgh.*

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*Edinburgh*, Printed by the Heirs and Successors of *Andrew Anderson*, Printer to the King's most Excellent Majestie, Anno DOM 1700.